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ABSTRACT

Professional development for teachers should include learning experiences that lead to greater personal and vocational self-understanding. Teachers need greater self-understanding to keep pace with social changes and to expand their skills. However, if teachers are to develop professionally--especially midcareer teachers--then administrators and others need to explore the factors affecting motivation to develop. A major factor affecting motivation is self-perception. Statements from a 1978 Australian teachers' seminar illustrate older teachers' perceptions of themselves as stale, out of touch with their subject disciplines, too long at their current positions, getting older, and growing away from their students and younger colleagues. The seminar participants suggested the need for an inservice coordinator or teacher counselor. A teacher counselor could enhance teachers' self-understanding and hence help motivate them to develop new skills. The implications of adult development theory for teacher development also need to be recognized. Midcareer teachers' tendency toward introspection and reexamination of priorities, for instance, is considered typical by adult development theorists. These and other theoretical insights should be taken into account in teacher development programs. (Author/RW)

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A Professional Publication for Educational Administrators

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In this paper Mr. France provides an elaboration of an issue raised in a previous edition, namely, the need to make careful provision for the professional development needs of large numbers of teachers already in our school systems. Basic to Mr. France's suggestion is the role of 'teacher counsellor'. (Ed.)

SELF-UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND THE ROLE OF TEACHER COUNSELLOR

Glyn France

INTRODUCTION

The term "professional development" involves the concept of professionalism. As applied to teaching, Macklin (1981) considers a "knowledge base", "an ideal of service" and "autonomy", as basic elements of professionalism. He argues, that because teachers use their knowledge and skills in a complex socially interactive context where rules are an inadequate guide, then values, perspectives and past experience are important influences in the decision-making process. Self-understanding is closely connected with the process of making practical judgements. Therefore,

> *. . .there is an obligation arising from the very idea of professional autonomy which presses teachers to attempt to bring to consciousness those influences which are simply taken for granted (p. 35).*

It is argued in this paper that any form of professional development with long-term relevance to teachers will involve learning experiences leading to greater personal and vocational self-understanding. This is necessary if teachers are to maintain their integrity while making a myriad of value judgements in the personal interactions of the classroom, including decisions about what is, or is not, outmoded in times of accelerating change.

However, as schools evolve in the next decade, the role of the educator will change. Teachers will have to become more expert in promoting cognitive learning, managing resources and co-operating with other agencies. In addition, their present caring role may extend to more explicit ways of helping society adjust to change. The Schools Commission (1981) sees an expansion of their work in developing non-cognitive competencies. The Victorian Enquiry into Teacher Education (1980), reviewing assumptions underlying education in the next twenty-five years, takes account of radical changes which seem possible in the attitudes and values of western society. Both the scope and speed of change may make the quality of the continuing professional education of teachers a focal point for educational debate in this decade.

Professional growth is a personal issue for classroom teachers already well into their careers. There is extensive American evidence (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975) suggesting that teachers reach a plateau of teaching effectiveness after only five to seven years. After that, pedagogical and managerial development does not come about by practice alone, but by explicit, purposeful learning with a strong element of self-motivation. Moreover, until the greater knowledge of adult learning processes gained over the past twenty years is more widely applied to programme design, many in-service activities will be less than effective, partly because insufficient recognition is given to the personal concerns and expectations of the experienced practitioner.

The Author

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A more individualised approach to the assessment of professional development needs of mature teachers has indeed, been proposed by the present writer (France, 1981). Some eighty experienced classroom teachers from government and non-government sectors, participating in seminars away from their own schools, attested to the more subtle personal/professional concerns and motivations affecting self-actualisation in their work (Glenbervie Teachers' Centre, 1978). They had been asked to describe what they as individuals saw as their own needs. Some of their written statements reflected negative self-perceptions associated with length of experience and possibly with awareness of ageing. Negative self-perceptions may seriously inhibit motivation to further learning, yet are often ignored in conventional staff development activities and in-service courses directed to the total age-experience range.

This paper will, therefore, argue that if teachers now approaching or passing through mid-career are to be helped to reconstruct their role in a profoundly changing society, administrators and teacher educators will need to explore factors affecting the individual learner's motivation towards further professional development, including perceptions of personal-vocational self. Ausubel's (1980) assertion that "the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows", must include self-knowledge. How adults perceive themselves both as persons and professionals may decisively affect their motivation to undertake substantial learning experiences capable of modifying attitudes and behaviour and effecting necessary change. This in turn will have implications for preferred professional development modes. Statements by teacher-participants in the seminars referred to will be considered in the light of this proposition.

"I WILL RUN OUT OF IDEAS"

It is, perhaps, surprising in view of the opportunity for discussion with other teachers, including those from other sectors of education, that both primary and secondary teachers should refer frequently to a sense of staleness. One seminar participant in a secondary school was dissatisfied with "what I can glean from disconnected reading and lack of access to research papers". Teachers felt they needed "access to professional literature on current thinking in my field and the chance to share this learning with others"; "more opportunities for adding to scholarly knowledge"; "the opportunity to write a paper on a particular topic"; "to have contact with people who are more aware of advances in subject disciplines"; and "discussion work on educational theories and philosophies", and so on. Middle or older age teachers are well aware of advances in knowledge since far-off university studies, but they are equally aware of school and family responsibilities which allow only snatches of learning from existing subject associations, journals, and in-service short courses. Perhaps at all levels of schooling teachers recognise a need for greater opportunity for intellectual stimulus than is currently available to them, both for its effect on student learning and on their work satisfaction. This can become resignation: "One cannot continue forever teaching the same subject at the same levels in the same way and retain any enjoyment in one's career". Or again, "(it is) difficult to enthuse about something one hasn't knowledge of at first hand".

Concern about staleness was referred to in various ways by primary teachers: "too long as a class teacher"; "too long at the same school at the same level"; "one is in danger of becoming stale and stuck in a rut forever"; and "I will run out of ideas". Comments about a sense of psychological isolation in the primary classroom were not uncommon. We can only wonder at the effects of this on perceptions of vocational-self over a period of years, including anxiety about a ritualised approach to teaching and about meeting the intellectual needs of able and less able students. One teacher expressed it in terms of a concern "to enrich my approach in dealing with students who are T.V. dominated". Many teachers enter their career with some idealism and see themselves as members of a helping profession. One teacher simply made the point, "I wish to develop whatever gifts I may have and be of maximum help to the school community". If appropriate continuing education is not, however, available, "the reservoir of personal philanthropy - the human benevolence that makes education a helping profession" (Rubin, 1971) tends to dry up, and the problem is compounded by disillusionment and cynicism.

No school principal will be unaware of the consequences of this for students and teachers alike. The diversification of the classroom teacher's role into other areas, such as middle level administration, pastoral leadership, career counselling, team coaching, producing plays, and so on, may not only be necessary in implementing the school's philosophy but also an on-site stimulus to professional growth. Yet the scope for this and for varying teaching allotments each year is limited. Without rigorous self-evaluation a school itself may adopt a comfortable style, allowing many of its teachers the false security of what is too familiar. For a time the maintenance of school rituals may obscure a decline in the professional dynamism of teachers individually or collectively. Efforts to move out of this situation make it even less likely that the teacher with doubts about his capacity to meet emerging needs, will easily communicate his concerns to those in authority in the school.

Thinking about these issues led teachers in the seminars to comment on the role of in-service co-ordinator. One participant defined the responsibilities of the position thus:

> *to disseminate information on courses, to encourage and facilitate people to attend courses outside the school, to be receptive to suggestions and criticisms from staff, parents and students leading to in-service programmes at school, to encourage other teachers to discover school and individual needs, to facilitate and encourage feed-back from in-service programmes.*

Indeed, the present writer regards the availability of a teacher counsellor (France, 1981) to perform these and other functions as the keystone in a school's professional development strategy. It is clearly necessary to go beyond curriculum revision and the up-dating of cognitive knowledge and skills, so that teachers can enhance the individual capacities for self-analysis, self-motivation and renewed understanding of the teaching role. Worthwhile professional education will clearly have, as one of its aims, the cultivation of the will and ability to continue learning, without which a sense of stagnation is unavoidable as the teacher's ability to adapt to environmental change diminishes.

One might, therefore, see an appropriately trained teacher counsellor undertaking the sensitive and complex tasks of helping colleagues to clarify the nature

of their concern and to engage in educational activities consistent with their professional learning styles and particular circumstances. Clarification is almost always necessary: someone who feels uneasy about his students' lack of zest may not have recognised how small is his repertoire of instructional methods or how effectively he stifles creativity. Moreover, teachers with extensive classroom practice may have unduly narrowed their interest in learning to what is concrete and immediately applicable to specific situations. They might prefer, on the basis of limited experience, to use relatively passive learning modes which offer little intrinsic satisfaction. Ultimately the teacher counsellor might introduce his colleagues to other teaching strategies, for example to procedures enabling them to research an aspect of their own teaching. It is not suggested that the role relationship between counsellor and client would necessarily develop easily, but that an acceptable colleague with appropriate knowledge and skills might enable others to deepen self-understanding and re-define professional goals.

"THE REALIZATION THAT ONE IS GROWING OLDER"

The self-perceptions of mature teachers already quoted were in part associated with length of experience and identified as a sense of staleness. It is suggested that other aspects of self-perception, expressed in terms of adjustment to changing relationships and values, may have their origin in an awareness of ageing. From the perspective of administrators and teacher educators both sets of concerns are less easily resolved than, for example, the teacher's need to be acquainted with new course material or assessment procedures. Because, however, self-understanding intimately affects the teacher's judgement in interactions with students, colleagues, parents and others, even the less clearly perceived influences on decision-making have to be taken into any consideration of professional development needs.

The teacher who commented on "the realization that one is growing older and further apart from one's charges" attributed perceived change in the self to the apparently natural course of adult development and linked with it seemingly inevitable distancing in relationships with pupils. Others made similar comments on "the changing ideas and values of modern youth" and the need for "a course that fosters understanding of today's youth". The teacher who felt the need for "a greater understanding of the thinking of young teachers" seemed to imply a threat to inter-personal communication and satisfying relationships with adults arising from age-related differences of attitudes, values and behaviour.

Such concerns may be valid. For individuals and ultimately for their schools they are important because relationships are central to work satisfaction, particularly for the class teacher. Younger and older people possibly look at specific issues differently, and Australian data (Connell, 1975) indicating student preference for young or perhaps middle-age teachers suggest that their older colleagues are sometimes at a disadvantage. Teacher effectiveness depends considerably on accurate perception of people and situations and on the adult's ability to manage countless inter-personal encounters in the day. It is therefore disturbing that an experienced teacher should voice a concern "to recognise my own personal needs and the problems which prevent me from recognising and meeting the needs of children". Whether or not assumptions embedded in these self-perceptions are in fact age-related, they should be examined in an effort to increase self-understanding and determine realistic ends and means in further professional growth. A teacher counsellor might well help in this process.

Some attention has more recently been given to theories of adult development and their implications for the continuing education of teachers (Mulford, 1979). Though often speculative, these theories may provide insights into the perceptions of the personal/ professional self. Developmental age theorists focus on possible associations between concerns, problems and tasks fairly common to adults at specific chronological age periods of their lives. Developmental stage theorists, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of consonance between significant events experienced by a person and the time at which they typically occur in adulthood. There would appear to be some convergence of view: for example, theorists in both camps see in the middle-age self (and, by implication, in mid-career teachers) a tendency towards reflection, introspection and stock-taking (Levinson, 1974) and to a re-examination of priorities and values (Neugarten, 1968). Because statements quoted below could be attributed to adults of almost any age or stage of development, it cannot be asserted that they are necessarily age-related. However, the prevalence of these self-perceptions in a group of predominantly middle-age teachers seems to lend support to such a possibility.

Many of the teachers' comments already cited refer to introspection and stock-taking. Individuals also expressed needs "to look in depth at my experience and to determine the positives"; "to interact with other teachers in my position to reinforce and consolidate my decisions, standards and philosophy"; and "to get a clearer idea of my own educational philosophy". Another wrote: "There is much to be achieved and you wonder if your direction is right". The issue of priorities was also raised: "I need to assess by some reasonably clear criteria whether I really do want to give up classroom teaching to improve the experience of more staff and more kids in schools". Other statements also indicated concern with values and perspectives: "to adjust to a rapidly changing society and to a new awareness of the real meaning of a 'just' society"; "to step outside Australian provincialism", "(to acquire) wider experience to gain a perspective", and "(to have) regular interchange of ideas with other people so as to feel as confident as possible that one's initiatives have validity".

Self-perceptions of this kind may illuminate a variety of theoretical positions, and may not necessarily be age-related. Nevertheless, generalised insights into adult growth must accommodate many aspects of individual adjustment to change. This includes, for example, the recognition that learning is a personal experience involving emotional responses, and that the adults involved in change pass through levels of concern which must be taken into account in planning the content and pace of professional development programmes (Hall, 1978). We should not dismiss the possibility that most people become less change-oriented with increasing age, opting instead for reassurance and validation in matters affecting professional judgement - a characteristic implicit in some of the teachers' comments. A learning mode encouraging systematic reflection on, and restructuring of, experience might be appropriate for persons well into their careers, but clarification of the attitudes and learning styles particular to individuals would be essential.

SUMMARY

In this paper the classroom teacher has been seen as professionally autonomous, involved in important decision-making affecting students and others. The nature of the teaching and learning interaction makes self-understanding by the teacher an influential factor in the decision-making process and a relevant objective of professional development programmes. Much of the time decision-making is bound up with the growing responsibilities of the teacher in a profoundly changing society. The quality of the learning experiences available to teachers in and outside schools will, it is argued, be crucially important to their effectiveness and to their own vocational self-actualisation, since practice of itself does not ensure an understanding of change or the development of positive responses to it.

Two consequences flow from the close connection of personal and professional self-perceptions which so deeply influence the motivation to further learning. First, is the need to precede any planned developmental experience with an attempt to clarify the concerns, expectations and motivations of the individual participants. Second, is the obligation to design such programmes in accordance with what is known about adult development and learning. Theoretical insights into these areas are touched on in the paper and the self-perceptions of practising teachers are considered, particularly from experience-related and age-related perspectives.

The ultimate responsibility for continuing one's professional education surely resides with the individual, yet it has to a large extent been abrogated by organisational demands. Meanwhile, difficulties which schools and systems face in devising effective strategies to meet the genuine needs of individual teachers in their particular communities, seem almost insuperable. These difficulties may be reduced - and at the same time the balance slightly redressed - if teacher counsellors with appropriate insights are available to help individuals as well as groups to clarify ends and means in professional development.

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